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Random Ramblings- Does the Focus on Banned Books Subtly Undermine Intellectual Freedom?

Bob Holley

Wayne State University, aa3805@wayne.edu

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Some of these programs are beginning to reach operational maturity and can demonstrate completion of specific milestones. At the same time, some necessary infrastructure has been developed that will facilitate disclosing these shared collection commitments around the world. This report will describe recent accomplishments and plans in two large-scale shared print initiatives worldwide and will outline these advances in infrastructure.

Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST)

WEST is a distributed retrospective print journal repository program serving more than 100 research libraries, college and university libraries, and two library consortia in the western part of the United States. WEST is the largest shared print program in the world so far, measured by the number of participating libraries.

Key features of WEST include:

- Journal titles are selected for retention based on a customized analysis of member holdings, grouping titles in title risk categories (e.g., availability of digital versions, print-only).
- Funding primarily supports the work of Archive Builders to review journal runs for completeness, call for holdings to fill gaps, review volumes for condition, and update metadata.

WEST recently announced completion of its first round of print journal archiving under a three-year program jointly funded by WEST members and the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**. In 2011-12, twelve WEST libraries contributed to the shared collection more than 6,100 journal titles in 4,300 journal families, comprising more than 160,000 volumes. These totals include almost 5,100 titles archived at the Bronze level (no validation, also have digital preservation), more than 500 titles archived at the Silver level (validated for completeness at the volume level), and more than 500 titles archived at the Gold level (validated for both completeness and condition at the issue level).

Archive creation for WEST Cycle 2 is under way, and collection analysis for WEST Cycle 3 will begin in fall 2012. More information about WEST is available at <http://www.cdlib.org/west>.

U.K. Research Reserve (UKRR)

The UK Research Reserve (UKRR) is a partnership between the **British Library** and 29 higher education institutions in the U.K., designed

to preserve and provide access to low use print journals. Under the UKRR program, the **British Library** retains and provides access to UKRR titles, with additional copies held at two other UKRR institutions to insure sufficient copies for the higher education community. After an initial pilot phase in 2007-2008, UKRR received funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to support a five-year Phase 2 (2009-2014).

Key features of UKRR include:

- Member libraries propose journal titles they wish to withdraw, that are then compared to titles already held in the program or represented in other member library collections.
- Funding primarily supports ingest efforts at the **British Library** and the work at participating libraries to donate volumes and to deselect local holdings based on UKRR titles.

As of mid-2012, UKRR has processed 50,000 titles into the program, equivalent to 68,000 linear meters of shelving space. UKRR is the largest shared print program in the world so far, measured by the number of titles designated. UKRR is undertaking a strategic review to inform planning for ongoing sustainability after the current program reaches its conclusion in 2014. More information about UKRR is available at <http://www.ukrr.ac.uk/>.

Others in planning

Some other programs being planned are worth following as they move from planning discussions into implementation:

- Canada: Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) Shared Print Archive Network (SPAN) is a distributed print journal collection using an approach similar to WEST (titles categorized by risk). In Phase 1 beginning in 2012, archive holders will commit to retain low-risk titles for a 10-year period. See <http://www.coppul.ca/projects/SPAN.html>.
- Hong Kong: Joint Universities Research Archive (JURA) will be a shared facility and collection for the eight tertiary education institutions of Hong Kong. Construction of JURA, an automated storage and retrieval system (ASRS) housing up to 7.4 million volumes, is expected to be completed in 2013. See <http://www.julac.org/project/index.html#JURA>.
- United States: Center for Institutional Cooperation (CIC) Shared Print Repository

is a program of ten CIC members to share **Elsevier** and **Wiley** journals housed at **Indiana University's** Auxiliary Library Facility (ALF). See <http://www.cic.net/Home/Projects/Library/>.

- United States: **HathiTrust** members approved a recommendation in October 2011 to establish a distributed archive of print monographs corresponding to the digital copies held in **HathiTrust**. Detailed planning is expected to begin in 2012-2013. See http://www.hathitrust.org/constitutional_convention2011_balot_proposals#proposal1.

Infrastructure for Sharing Collection Commitments

Most shared print programs use a local database or catalog to analyze and share information about materials that are to be retained. To disseminate such information widely outside the regional group, a more global approach is needed.

In 2011-2012, a working group from the shared print community, including **OCLC** staff, developed and tested a recommended data structure designed to make collection commitment information available in a standardized form to libraries worldwide through the WorldCat database. A description of the pilot project and its final report with detailed metadata guidelines is available at: <http://www.oclc.org/productworks/shared-print-management.htm>.

During a similar time period, the **Center for Research Libraries (CRL)** developed the Print Archives Preservation Registry (PAPR) knowledgebase, with the **California Digital Library (CDL)** as development partner. PAPR includes a Directory providing information about shared print programs and their participating libraries, and a database of Archived Titles contributed by shared print programs. PAPR currently includes Archived Titles from WEST, **CRL's JSTOR Collection**, **ASERL**, and others. The PAPR knowledgebase is freely searchable at <http://www.papr.crl.edu>.

Groups and libraries that are embarked on shared print agreements are urged to share information about affected titles through these WorldCat and PAPR knowledgebases. Amassing consistent data about worldwide shared print retention commitments will enable all libraries to make informed decisions about managing their local collections and will promote comprehensive preservation of research collections. 🌿

Random Ramblings — Does the Focus on Banned Books Subtly Undermine Intellectual Freedom?

Column Editor: **Bob Holley** (Professor, Library & Information Science Program, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202; Phone: 248-547-0306; Fax: 313-577-7563) <aa3805@wayne.edu>



I write this column with trepidation because I am a hardcore advocate for intellectual freedom. Ever since I was appointed Chair of the **ACRL** Intellectual Freedom Committee in 2002, intellectual freedom has been my focus within **ALA**. I've served on the Intellectual Freedom Roundtable (IFRT) Executive Committee, chaired the group, and will now represent IFRT for the

next three years on **ALA** Council. I attend as many meetings as possible of the Freedom to Read Foundation (I also regularly send a check) and the **ALA** Intellectual Freedom Committee. I write on intellectual freedom. The hundreds of students who have taken my collection development course get a rousing unit on intellectual freedom.

I am not questioning the exceptional success

of the efforts to publicize Banned Books Week. **ALA** and all its units involved with intellectual freedom garner attention and much public support with this event. During Banned Books Week, libraries have exhibits of banned books, sponsor readings from them, and generally increase awareness of intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom

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also gets great publicity from the press and widespread discussion in blogs, wikis, and other Internet Web 2.0 tools. Nonetheless, I have four concerns about this focus on banned books.

1. Many of These Books Aren't Really Banned. I'm including this criticism only because I've heard several times from conservative librarians that many books are "challenged" rather than "banned" because they ultimately remain in the collection. I don't believe that this observation has real importance. "Banned" carries much more weight than "challenged." While the wording may stretch the truth a bit, I expect that most people don't find this to be objectionable in today's hyper-marketing environment. Each challenge is an attack on intellectual freedom even if book isn't banned.

2. Most Books Are Banned over Concerns about Their Being Read by Children and Young Adults. In reading the many articles about book challenges in the multiple intellectual freedom discussion lists to which I subscribe, I remember very few that concerned adult access to reading materials. To confirm this impression, I accessed the list of "Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books: 2000-2009" on the ALA Website. (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedbydecade/2000_2009) Of the top twenty-five, only seven are adult titles. Furthermore, from my readings, I am willing to bet a large sum that most, if not all, of the challenges concerning these "adult" books dealt with their being read by teenagers. I will, however, point out one exception — *50 Shades of Grey*, which was either pulled from the shelves or not purchased at all by some public libraries, despite its status as a bestseller.

The reason for the focus on children and young adults is simple. Potential censors and concerned parents can make a much more sympathetic case for protecting "innocent" children than they can for shielding "consenting adults." For younger children, some believe that examples of bad behavior such as can be found in the *Captain Underpants* series can infect their children with disrespect for authority. For teenagers, the realistic themes of some of the best young adult books and adult novels worry those who believe that the teenage years are a time of happiness and a time for prolonging innocence. Youth should be sheltered from the unpleasant aspects of life. My final comment is that many parents wish to deny that their children have become sexual beings and don't want to encounter any evidence to the contrary. While I don't have the citation, I remember a study that asked parents whether their teenage children were sexually active. Only 10% said yes while the actual figure is closer to 50%. As I'll discuss in more detail below, my point is that the emphasis upon "banning" books for children and young adults detracts from the serious concerns with intellectual freedom for adults.

3. The Library Must Have Purchased the Book for It to be Banned. An obvious requirement for a book to be challenged or banned is that the library purchased it. The focus on banned books puts the onus on the general public. Librarians are the heroes for their decision to make controversial materials freely available. Thus, Banned Book Week makes librarians look good as crusaders for intellectual freedom. What the focus on banned books overlooks is the tendencies of many librarians to avoid any materials that might cause controversy. The book not purchased can't be challenged. Mainstream book reviews are good at indicating items that might cause controversy to alert librarians who don't want to face a possible

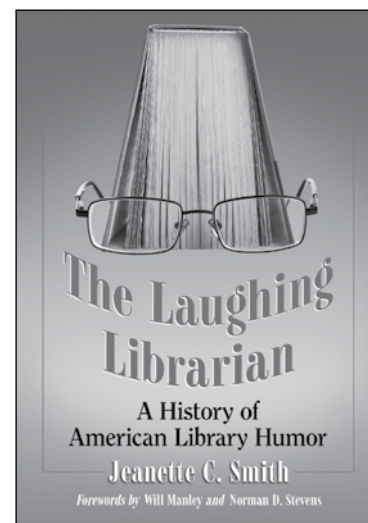
challenge. Instead of materials selection, some librarians practice materials evasion.

I have done research in this area and drawn some narrow conclusions. Each semester, I give students in my collection development course an anonymous survey where I ask them to indicate their purchasing decisions for thirty-two controversial adult books. I selected these items from the **Loompanics Unlimited** catalog. (**Loompanics** "was an American book seller and publisher specializing in nonfiction on generally unconventional or controversial topics, with a philosophy considered tending to a mixture of libertarian and left-wing ideals.") The company went out of business in 2006 because "Amazon.com, eBay, and Google refused to allow **Loompanics** to advertise on their sites." (source: Wikipedia) Some of the items are extremely controversial including how to be a hit man and ways to steal food, but others meet valid information needs of public library patrons. The homeless would profit from the title on how to live on the street. My particular favorite as a challenge for intellectual freedom is a specialized career guidance book for the sex industry, *Turning Pro*, by **Magdalene Meretrix**. Many of the occupations in the sex industry are as legal as being a church secretary; but this book, according to WorldCat, is held by only one American public library system, the Washoe County Library System in Nevada. The book includes practical information such as "continuing education" and "planning for the future." While the statistic may be unreliable, the consensus estimate is that at least one million people work or have worked in the sex industry in the United States compared with the reliable statistic of 156,100 librarians. My point is that this book could be useful to large numbers of public library patrons but hasn't been purchased because of its controversial subject. I expect the same is true for books on marijuana cultivation (now permitted in some parts of the country), begging, and other unsavory though legal activities. These potentially useful books won't ever be challenged because few if any libraries will buy them. Most librarians probably don't worry that such materials aren't in their collections though they would meet valid information needs for some members of their user community. I won't even broach the issue of legal pornography.

4. The Focus on Banned Books Makes Intellectual Freedom Look Easy. I've always thought that one of the reasons for the popularity of the movie *ET* was that it created no obligation for the viewers. They could leave the movie promising to be extra nice to the first extraterrestrial they encountered without worrying about ever meeting one. The heart-rending dog movie might at least make some feel guilty about not paying enough attention to their pets. I submit that the focus on banned books has the same effect upon intellectual freedom.

If banned books are all there is to intellectual freedom, librarians have the right to be smug. What reasonable librarian wouldn't support the *Harry Potter* series? How ridiculous to ban a book because two male penguins parent an egg? Will a few pictures of a young boy prancing nude really corrupt our delicate youth? (*Sendak's In the Night Kitchen*) Most books on the banned books lists are easy to defend. Even the more difficult cases such as **Twain's** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and **Angelou's** *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* have enough literary merit to make the decision to keep them in the library collection easily justifiable. In fact, many of the most frequently banned books are on required reading lists in schools where the exposure creates the controversy. The books most often banned don't usually raise difficult issues like practical

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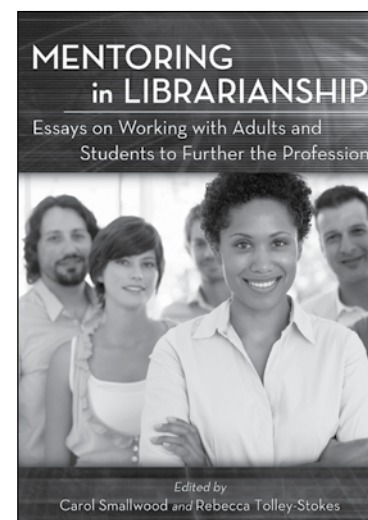


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Downloads from the Zeitgeist: the Shape of Things to Come....

Where are my flying cars? If you've asked yourself this lately, well join the club. In the 1950s, quite possibly to take our minds off the duck-and-roll drills practiced to shield ourselves from the mushroom cloud of the eve of destruction, futurists, riffing on rapid developments in the technology of air and ground travel, proposed the genial union of flight and drive. There we were, a smiling nuclear family of four, out for a Sunday afternoon drive and flight. General Aviation never seemed easier in the cloudless skies of the future.

Did anyone promise librarians and our patrons the library equivalent of "flying cars?" Cynics among us might say the journal publisher's "Big Deal" had enough conflation of fiction and reality to provide the necessary lift. Like the old house lifted into the skies in the animated film *Up*, the house, the kid, and the grumpy old man may seem like library, library user, and librarians, while the rich evil guy may be Elsevier or its current surrogate ACS. We've got to admit, though, the Big Deal thrilled us before it chilled us, and the prospect of having it all strikes us a special bibliographic hyper-fixia consistent with flying cars.

Or should we nominate Google Scholar? Recently *The Charleston Advisor* awarded the search engine with its vanishing product award. In 2011 Google Scholar, once featured prominently in Google's top products, disappeared into the simply "More" where Google products reside in reduced use and purpose. We're told that it was a corporate decision by Google's lead engineer who spoke at the 32nd Charleston Conference in early November. This probably means its use and user count simply didn't ring Google's algorithmic bells enough to warrant valuable first-screen positioning. So now it's still there but not standing on the shoulders of Giants — at least not the millennium era's version of a giant, the Gargantuan Google.

Our thought, though, on the library flying car — a futurist vision that might have been a contender — travels technology by way of Vannevar Bush's Memex and Ted Nelson's Hypertext. In the August 1945 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, Bush wrote in "As We May Think" about computing machines that would relate objects of information to one another so knowledge would reveal its intrinsic and extrinsic relatedness. What was once isolated in books, articles, and other knowledge containers would finally be retrievable based on relationships to each other. Ted Nelson took this one step further in his notion of hypertext — documents themselves would be composed of links to related documents in new and interesting ways.

Of course, now we have the World Wide Web and Google Scholar's take on a better search engine for library content. Unfortunately, we need only a few minutes with it to learn that problems persist especially in the world of woe of broken or misdirected URL links. Instead of appropriate copy we may have the "just-good-enough" copy. Because Google Scholar fails to deliver, we are in need of new

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guides for LGBT lifestyles and health, sex education, birth control, evolution, sex before marriage, positive views of non-traditional adult sexual activities such as adultery and swinging, and the topics already mentioned above. I would suspect that some librarians have problems with representing both sides of issues such as gun control and abortion when these issues would offend a large proportion of their library users.

In conclusion, do I think that this brief article will have any effect upon the celebration of Banned Books Week and other similar efforts throughout the year? Of course not. The publicity that libraries and intellectual freedom get from the media is too important to overlook. What I want is some recognition that support for banned books is the easy part. Banned books are only a portion of the spectrum of issues concerned with intellectual freedom. Librarians have an obligation to support the information needs of their users — even on highly controversial topics. A commitment to intellectual freedom should look beyond the easy part — banned books — to support these difficult decisions. 